

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 25, 2012

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Scott Walker's Rhetoric Versus Reality

Walker Set to Take on the Truth in Second State of the State

Madison – Governor Scott Walker failed to tackle Wisconsin's jobs crisis - posting six straight months of job losses here while nationally jobs are being added - and is now poised to take on "the truth" in his second State of the State address.

In Gov. Walker's one year in office he has failed the people of Wisconsin by attacking their values and pursuing policies that serve the special interests, the wealthy and big corporations instead of the people.

To prepare the public for what they can expect to hear as Gov. Walker attempts to put a positive spin on his year of failure, One Wisconsin Now is providing a fact check of the top five falsehoods Gov. Walker continues to foist on Wisconsin.

1. Gov. Walker's claim: His "reforms" have "improved education" in Wisconsin

(<http://www.reforms.wi.gov/docview.asp?docid=22600&locid=185>)

The Truth: K-12 public schools, the University of Wisconsin and Technical College Systems are grappling with devastating budget cuts. Our children's opportunity for a quality K-12 public education has been harmed, worker training has been scaled back and tuition increases have put higher education further out of reach for many Wisconsinites.

Walker's budget enacted the biggest cuts to state aid for schools in Wisconsin history – the combination of reductions in state aid and local levy limits means our schools are being forced to take a \$1.6 billion budget hit. (*Wisconsin State Journal*, 3/2/11; http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2011_127.pdf)

According to a survey conducted by the Wisconsin Association of School Boards in association with the Department of Public Instruction, these cuts are causing real harm to our schools. Nearly 90% of Wisconsin's school districts provided responses to the WASDA survey.

(http://www.dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2011_127.pdf)

Among the findings:

- 2011-12 school staffing cuts this year are double the cuts of the last two years combined;
- 90% of K-12 public school students attend a district with net staff loss in one of four categories surveyed; and
- 40% of students are in districts that eliminated sections or increased class sizes in core subjects like English, math, science and social studies.

And while decimating the state public schools system, Walker diverted money to and expanded the private school voucher program. In total, Walker's budget increased public funding of private

and religious schools in Milwaukee by over \$22 million. (*Legislative Fiscal Bureau, Comparative Summary of Budget Recommendations, August 2011*)

Unfortunately, for both children and taxpayers, the voucher program has failed to deliver. According to an analysis of standardized test scores of students in the private school voucher program and Milwaukee Public Schools, public school students had higher levels of proficiency in both reading and math. (*Institute for One Wisconsin, D Is For Dismantle, 12/11; <http://dpi.wi.gov/oea/pdf/mps-mcpc-swd.pdf>*)

Walker's budget damage is not limited to K-12 education. Wisconsin's technical colleges, a key cog in helping workers upgrade their skills and providing employers with a well-trained workforce, saw a \$71.6 million cut in general state aid. (*Legislative Fiscal Bureau, Comparative Summary of Budget Recommendations, August 2011*) The result has been cuts to programming at a time when enrollment is up. (*La Crosse Tribune, 11/20/11; Wisconsin Public Radio, 1/11/12*)

An education at a University of Wisconsin System school moved farther out of reach for many and became more expensive for everyone with the \$107 million in tuition hikes under the Walker budget (*Legislative Fiscal Bureau, State Tax and Fee Modifications Included in 2011 Act 32, 7/5/11*). An initial budget cut of \$250 million has been followed up with additional cuts of \$46 million. The result of the largest cuts to UW in state history according to UW System President Kevin Reilly will be less faculty, larger class sizes, fewer course offerings and an educational "bottleneck" that lengthens the time it takes for many students to earn their degree. (*Capital Times, 12/21/11; Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 12/23/11*)

According to a recent study released by the Illinois State University Center for the Study of Education Policy, the cut to state support for the UW System is among the largest, on a percentage basis, in the nation. (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 1/24/12*)

2. Gov. Walker's claim: "Employer confidence is up and job creators are optimistic" and "94% of job creators feel Wisconsin is now heading in the right direction"
(*Walker/Republican Party of Wisconsin direct mail*)

The Truth: Walker's claim is based on a ridiculously small sampling of CEOs hand picked by the state's big business lobby. Other conservative-funded polling reveals widespread dissatisfaction with the direction of the state, Gov. Walker's job performance and his specific policies.

Walker's claim is based on an online survey of Wisconsin CEOs conducted by the state big business lobby, Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce (WMC). According to WMC, 1,167 CEOs were selected to participate in their survey, and responses were received from 281 individuals. Over 75% of those surveyed did not respond.
(<http://www.wmc.org/MediaOutlet/display.cfm?ID=2591>)

According to the US Census Bureau, in 2009 there were nearly 141,000 businesses in Wisconsin (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/55000.html>). The 281 hand picked CEOs surveyed by WMC and touted by Walker as representative of the approval of his agenda by job creators represents less than two tenths of one percent of state businesses

By comparison, a statewide poll commissioned by the conservative, pro-corporate Wisconsin Policy Research Institute found:

- 56% disapproved of Walker's performance as Governor;
- 57% believed the state is on the wrong track;
- Only 28% felt the economy in Wisconsin will get better over the next year; and
- 53% believe Walker's budget cuts will lead to a decline in the quality of life in Wisconsin.

(<http://www.wpri.org/polls/Oct2011/poll103011.html>)

Public opinion on the specifics of Walker's agenda is no better according to a recent poll that found:

- 65% opposed cuts to state aid to public schools; and
- 55% opposed cutting the BadgerCare health insurance program.

(<https://law.marquette.edu/poll/>)

3. Gov. Walker's claim: His budget turned a \$3.6 million deficit into a surplus

(<http://www.reforms.wi.gov/docview.asp?docid=22600&locid=185>)

The Truth: Walker's own Department of Administration certified in a letter to the federal government and in their own reporting admitted that Wisconsin will have a budget deficit through June 2013.

On December 29, 2011 Department of Administration Secretary Mike Huebsch sent a letter to DHHS Secretary Sebelius in which he wrote that, "... Wisconsin would have a budget deficit, based on generally accepted accounting principles, during state fiscal years 2012 and 2013." (12/29/11 letter DOA Secretary Mike Huebsch to DHHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius)

The letter was sent in support of the Walker Administration's plan to make changes to the BadgerCare program, changes that would result in an estimated 65,000 Wisconsinites, including 29,000 children, losing their health care and thousands more paying more for their health insurance and getting less coverage. (http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lfb/publications/Section-13.10/Documents/2011_11_10JFC_DHS_4.pdf)

The Department of Administration further revealed in December 2011 in the Comprehensive Annual Fiscal Report the state has a general fund deficit of \$2.99 billion in 2010-11. (DOA *Comprehensive Annual Fiscal Report*, 12/11)

4. Gov. Walker's claim: He did not increase taxes or raid segregated funds in his budget

(Walker campaign ad <http://www.scottwalker.org/news/2012/01/governor-walker-takes-his-message-wisconsinites-latest-ad>;

<http://www.reforms.wi.gov/section.asp?linkid=1769&locid=185>)

The Truth: Walker targeted seniors and the working poor for tax increases, raised fees and raided funds to pay for tax breaks for the wealthy and corporations in his budget.

While Gov. Walker's budget provides huge tax giveaways to the wealthy and corporations, he hit those least able to afford it with tax increases. In a stunning display of misplaced priorities, the Walker budget increases taxes on the working poor and nearly 70,000 seniors by \$70 million. (*Legislative Fiscal Bureau, State Tax and Fee Modifications Included in 2011 Act 32, 7/5/11*)

Gov. Walker's budget also contains over \$411 million in fund raids (*Legislative Fiscal Bureau, Use of Certain Funds Within the State's 2011-13 Budget 7/5/11*) and increases fees by over \$136 million, including \$107 million in tuition hikes on UW students. (*Legislative Fiscal Bureau, State Tax and Fee Modifications Included in 2011 Act 32, 7/5/11*)

5. Gov. Walker's claim: "It's Working"

(<http://www.reforms.wi.gov/section.asp?linkid=1769&locid=185>)

The Truth: Walker's policies have been an unmitigated disaster for the middle class, working families, children and seniors of Wisconsin.

Facts don't lie – Under Gov. Walker, Wisconsin is among the worst states in job creation and has suffered six straight months of job losses while the national economy has gained jobs. (*US Bureau of Labor Statistics*)

Misplaced priorities have delivered hundreds of millions of dollars in tax giveaways to those who need them least while taxes are increased on the working poor and senior citizens. (*Legislative Fiscal Bureau, State Tax and Fee Modifications Included in 2011 Act 32, 7/5/11*)

Health care cuts threaten to take away access to health insurance for 65,000 Wisconsinites, including 29,000 children. (http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lfb/publications/Section-13.10/Documents/2011_11_10JFC_DHS_4.pdf)

The Walker administration is seeking a federal waiver that would take \$14 million out of the pockets of Wisconsin consumers and give it to insurance companies (http://www.safetyweb.org/healthwatchwi%5CABC_comments_HHS_MLRwaiver.pdf) while turning away aid to help improve health care access in Wisconsin and protect consumers from price gouging and abuses that allowed insurance companies to deny people coverage for pre-existing health conditions and drop your health insurance if you get sick. (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 1/18/12; 1/20/12*)

Cuts to education harm our children by diminishing their opportunities to get a great education and hamstringing employers who need a well-trained workforce to succeed in a global economy. (http://www.dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2011_127.pdf; *Institute for One Wisconsin, D Is For Dismantle, 12/11*)

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One Wisconsin Now is a statewide communications network specializing in effective earned media and online organizing to advance progressive leadership and values.